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Gov. M. Jodi Rell's latest two-year \$37.2 billion "no-tax" budget withholds \$41 million in economic-development spending, including tourism, which area lawmakers and tourism experts fear will hurt the state in the long run.

Over the next two fiscal years, Rell has proposed suspending funding for statewide marketing to promote Connecticut as a tourist destination, saving around \$10 million, according to a budget negotiations list on her Web site. In addition, suspending funding for tourism districts, including the Eastern Regional Tourism District in New London, would save about \$2.4 million.

Other steps include drastically reducing state museum hours, suspending funding for film industry training and 15 other cost-saving measures in the state Department of Economic and Community Development budget. State Senate President Donald E. Williams Jr., D-Brooklyn, and others say the moves would inhibit future growth when the economy eventually recovers.

Williams recommends cutting the overhead in half in the state's Department of Public Health, which he says is about double the cost of other departments, and cutting a quarter of the managerial positions in the state Department of Children & Families.

Rell Spokesman Rich Harris said Tuesday that Rell wants to see "specific, meaningful cuts" from Williams and the Democrats in the General Assembly.

"What the governor has tried to do is sit down and go over agency appropriations line by line," Harris said. "She has proposed nearly \$3 billion in cuts and they have accepted just \$192 million."

State dollars invested in tourism pay back the state four- to nine-fold in revenue, according to Michael Riegel, chairman of the Mystic Coast & Country Travel Industry Association, and Donna Simpson, executive director of the Eastern Regional Tourism District.

"Michigan, which is in a far worse state than our market, has made an increase in tourism (spending)," said state Sen. Andrew Maynard, D-Stonington, a member of the Appropriations Committee. "I hope I can keep that kind of a message in negotiations and retain much, if not all, of the tourism funding."

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